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AN APPEAL

TO PROFESSING CHRISTIANS

RESPECTING THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH

IN REGARD TO WAR:

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF PHILADELPHIA.

FRIENDS' BOOK STORE,
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AN APPEAL.

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (Jas. iv: 1.) That heathen tribes should maintain a continuous state of preparation for expected attacks from other tribes, is consistent with their uncivilized and unchristianized condition; but that those claiming to be Christians should so far ignore the precepts and example of the Holy Head and Founder of their religion as to regard one another as enemies, can be accounted for on no other ground than this, viz: that blindness hath in part overtaken them—they acknowledge Christ, but not in *all* their ways—his words do influence their conduct in many respects: but in relation to war, the demands of a misguided patriotism would seem to outweigh all considerations of religious duty; and the fact is overlooked that a call to war is a call to destroy the lives and property of those whom Christ has enjoined his followers to love. "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

Deeds that are called criminal in times of peace, are commended in times of war. The lawmakers who seek to control men's passions, by law, seek also by law to unloose those passions and set brother against brother, in the name of patriotism. "My country, right or wrong," is a pernicious sentiment often applauded by a professedly Christian community. War legalizes murder, plunder, arson, false pretence; and

Christian nations commend all these as necessary, and therefore right. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" — never. "By their fruits ye shall know them" and it is to Christians we appeal —to ministers of the Gospel, to teachers and parents, that for the sake of righteousness in the earth, they cease preaching and teaching that war and preparation for war are consonant with the Gospel of Christ.

The Christian minister feels that it is a disgrace and a serious obstacle to the advancement of the good cause he has espoused, for any portion of his flock to live at enmity with each other; but when war is declared between nations, the course of their teaching is changed by many. They no longer urge the benign precepts of the Saviour of men as binding, but the laws of men; and for war purposes preach an entirely different code of Christian ethics. From whence do they get their authority for so doing?

Is there anything whatever found in the New Testament or in the heart's cravings for holiness, that revives for war purposes the law of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" and yet keeps alive for other times "the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus which makes free from the law of sin and death?" Oh ye "teachers," ye "leaders of the people," how can ye exalt Christ by such a divided allegiance? Has He not said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me?"

Have you, dear Christian people, ever paused long enough in front of the query, "From whence come wars and fightings?" to rightly consider your responsibilities as ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, when fostering the spirit of war in your own hearts, or the hearts of others?

Does not the part you take in the various schemes to keep alive and urge the view that a nation must be ready at all times to strike and to strike back, contradict your prayers and confound the honest seeker after the Truth of God? Do you not thereby retard the advance of the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth, and put to shame the profession made of being Christ's followers?

Men love consistency, and when it is on the side of right may be led thereby to higher planes of thought and life, and they turn instinctively from the leading of men untrue to the principles they profess.

The Christian is presumed to be a co-worker with God in the regeneration of the world. Whoever enlists under His banner may be justly expected to obey His commandments. The exigencies of war render a compliance with the precepts of Christ impossible. Warriors themselves admit this, but contend that war is a necessary evil. Where shall Christians be found in such an emergency? Side by side with God, or side by side with men who are violating His commands?

The belief that war is a *necessary* evil implies a want of faith in the promises and protecting care of the Almighty. The Proverbs of Solomon declare that "whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." The truth of this was verified by the experience of William Penn and the early colonists of Pennsylvania.

Are not we too much like the rebellious children of Israel, whom the prophet Isaiah condemned, because they took counsel, but not of the Lord, and on whom he pronounced a woe because they go "down to Egypt for help, and stay upon horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they

are very strong; but they look not unto the holy one of Israel, neither seek the Lord?" If we substitute firearms for horses, and vessels of war for chariots, is not this woe in measure applicable to our own beloved country, which is in danger of trusting to such means of defence, instead of seeking the Lord who hath declared, "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land?"

These promises belong to nations and communities as much as to individuals, yet there are many professing Christians who admit their force as to their private lives; but in national affairs place their trust in military power. The most effective means of changing such a perverted view, is the infusion of the Spirit of the Gospel into the heart. The Prophet Isaiah, in speaking prophetically of the coming and kingdom of Christ, says, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" and he uses this beautiful comparison, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them." And when our Holy Redeemer came on the earth, He pronounced blessings on the meek, the merciful, and the peacemaker—on those qualities which are the most antagonistic to the spirit of war; and the commands He gave to his disciples can in no way be made to harmonize with warlike measures.

These commands are so clear and positive, that no language could be used which would convince one that rejects their authority. We greatly desire that the professing Church of Christ would accept his instruc-

tions according to their plain and distinct meaning, instead of exercising their ingenuity in explaining away, and making his words of no effect.

You and we, dear Christian brethren, can scarcely differ in the belief, that our Lord's Sermon on the Mount is designed to hold a very prominent place in his recorded teachings. In this is frequently enforced the view, that, whatever might have been allowable under the "old covenant," the animus of that dispensation which Christ had ushered into the world is love to God and love to man in their fullest application. Could the spirit which breathes through that marvellous utterance of Divine wisdom and love but enter into and possess our hearts, there would, we are persuaded, be left no disposition to uphold war with all its horrors; still less the motives and the passions which must prevail in order to make war possible.

The speedy abandonment of this most unchristian method of settling differences between civilized nations rests to-day, as we firmly believe, with the professing Christian Church, which has so long given it an implied, and too often, a hearty support. The responsibility for its continuance thus entails a burden, from which she should fervently seek to be delivered. Shall not we, then, who acknowledge ourselves followers of the Lamb of God, be so true to Him, his plain precepts and his example, that the heathen shall no longer be stumbled by the action of so-called Christian nations, nor the sceptic or the scoffer find the ample material which is now afforded for their thrusts and sneers at our holy religion. All who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity will then rejoice in a new and powerful bond of union with one another, which, in the present

weak and inconsistent attitude of the Church regarding war, is not possible. With a clear, fresh message of "peace on earth and good will toward men" thrilling the breasts of Christian believers everywhere, the work of the world's conversion would go more rapidly forward, and that happy day, foretold by the prophet Isaiah, be hastened, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

BOYS' BRIGADES.

In all brotherly freedom, we would call your very serious attention to the organizations known as "Boys' Brigades," which have been recently introduced in many congregations, and have met with a dangerous popularity. Let us consider whether there are not tendencies and consequences inseparable from them which are inimical to the highest interests of our youth, and the true work of the Church.

With the inculcation of prompt obedience to superiors, is there not fostered a love of arbitrary power in the boys who command? Is not an admiration for martial display begotten by the parade and the trappings which are part of the outfit of the Brigade? Do these not minister to the pride and vanity of human nature, which so early assert themselves, and, viewed from the Christian standpoint, need no stimulus? Will not the precision and efficiency with which large numbers move under the control of one or more leading minds, give an undue estimate as to the value or necessity for military service in the administration of civil government? And is not the general tendency of such training as is de-

rived through the Boys' Brigade, to lead away from the Gospel view of the Church, its rightful service, the nature of that conflict with sin and error to which it is indeed called, and the method by which it is to be carried on, whereof the Apostle Paul declares, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

If the system has these tendencies, unfavorable to moral and religious welfare, of how little comparative value are the discipline and physical advantages claimed for it! and how directly does it conflict with the principle involved in the command of our Saviour, "Seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof."

"The Committee appointed on the twentieth of last Third Month to consider the growth of a military spirit in the United States, produced an essay of an address to their fellow-Christians on the subject of war. It was read, carefully considered and united with, and referred to the Committee who prepared it for distribution."

Extracted from the minutes of the Representative meeting of Friends of Philadelphia, held Sixth Month 19th, 1896.

JOSEPH WALTON, *Clerk.*

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